



The California Master Plan for Education

Myths vs. FACTS

Myth: The office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) will be eliminated, changed to an appointed position, or stripped of its power.

FACT: The Master Plan does not propose to eliminate the SPI, but to redefine it in a way that makes it stronger by focusing it on a few critical roles. The SPI has never held uncontested power, since control of the education budget lies chiefly with the governor. The Master Plan would give the SPI perhaps the most important role in education: ensuring that *every* participant involved in education is accountable for meeting his/her responsibilities toward improving student learning. The Master Plan also recommends that the SPI remain elected, and become a more independent voice for the people of California, free to speak openly about the education system and the adequacy of support it receives. Currently, the SPI is not able to be an objective voice of the people, since that may require criticizing the SPI's office itself, as manager of the Department of Education. The Master Plan recommends that the Department – other than its accountability functions – be made the responsibility of the governor, so that control of education programs and the money to fund them rest with the same office, thereby establishing clear lines of responsibility for state-level education governance.

Myth: The Master Plan is self-executing.

FACT: Although many of the recommendations in the Master Plan can be carried out without legislation, others require legislation to be implemented. All of the recommendations require some action.

Myth: The Master Plan advocates spending more money in the same manner it is currently being spent.

FACT: The Master Plan advocates cost-effectiveness. It does not advocate spending more money in the same manner, especially if there is no evidence that such expenditures contribute to student achievement. More funding will be required to accomplish certain goals, but, overall, the Master Plan recommends that resources be allocated in a more cost-efficient manner.

Myth: The Master Plan is an extension of, or an addition to, the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education.

FACT: Master Plan for Education, delivered to the Legislature in August 2002, has now become *the* Master Plan – replacing the Master Plan for Higher Education (while incorporating much of it).

Myth: The Master Plan is a move toward more state control and less local control.

FACT: While the most important priorities for every child would continue to be controlled by the State, the Master Plan recommends the first legal method to secure local control—"home rule"—whereby communities can protect their right to make certain decisions about education in their school districts. It also supports local decision-making about the most effective ways to achieve state goals, while holding local districts accountable for the results of those decisions.

Myth: The Master Plan ignores some students or groups of students.

FACT: The Master Plan pertains to *all* students. Since it focuses on students rather than on programs or institutions, not every group, type of funding, or kind of need was explicitly addressed in the document.

Myth: The Master Plan recommends mandatory preschool.

FACT: The Master Plan recommends *voluntary access* to preschool. The phrase "universal preschool" simply means there will be universal *access* for all students whose parents desire them to attend. No student would be required to attend.

Myth: The Master Plan was created through a process that was quick and politically secretive.

FACT: The Master Plan is the result of three-and-a-half years of research, working group discussions, hearings—many in cities outside the capital—and public testimony taken in person, electronically, and by mail. Two drafts of the plan were disseminated to the public and subsequently rewritten to reflect public comment before the final Master Plan was submitted to the Legislature in August 2002.

Myth: The Master Plan overemphasizes college and ignores the needs of non-college-bound students.

FACT: The Master Plan stresses the acquisition of knowledge and skills that will prepare students for the full range of life choices after high school, whether vocational or academic. It recommends learning environments and curriculum that give students the choice to successfully enter the workforce or attend college.

Myth: The Master Plan is a document that references specifics and is to be rigidly interpreted.

FACT: The Master Plan is akin to a constitution—it provides specific goals and principles but remains flexible in the means selected to pursue those goals. The Master Plan recognizes that the needs of California's 9 million students are diverse and that those needs will change over time. The plan also recommends that a committee reconvene at least every 10 years to review the plan and update it as necessary to better reflect the needs of future generations.

Myth: It is too late for Californians to contribute to the Master Plan process.

FACT: The process of implementing the Master Plan is just beginning and there are still many opportunities for the public to get involved. Legislation is currently being drafted, for introduction in December, to 'flesh out' and put many of the recommendations into law. Work to carry out recommendations that do not require legislation is just beginning. Input from the general public is welcome and encouraged. For more information about how to get involved in the Master Plan process, please contact the Master Plan office at 916-324-4983.